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Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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***Implementing  
Water Resources Planning  
through  
Your West River  
Conservancy  
Sub-District***

- History
- Legal Rights
- Findings
- Plans

Cooperative Extension Service  
South Dakota State University, Brookings  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



# Implementing Water Resources Planning through Your West River Conservancy Sub-District

By  
F. F. Kerr, Water Resources Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service,  
South Dakota State University, and Keith Harner, manager, West  
River Conservancy Sub-District.

## PART I — History and Legal Rights

### When Organized

Creation of the West River Conservancy Sub-District was authorized by a vote of the electorate in November, 1968. It officially came into existence in 1969 with its organizational meeting held on April 22, 1969, in Pierre, S.D.

The West River Sub-District is the sixth to be formed in the state. Boundaries of all of the Sub-Districts are shown on Map No. 1 (next pages).

There are nine elected directors in the West River Sub-District. Their names and places of residence are shown on Map No. 2 (next pages).

### Sub-District's Early Functions Under the Law

The Conservancy District Act outlines the usual powers granted sub-divisions of state government, such as acquisition of property, condemnation rights, right to sue and be sued.

The arrangements for taxing power, however, differ from most. As soon as a Sub-District is organized it automatically *has power to levy a tax of not more than one-tenth of one mill* on all taxable property in the Sub-District. The West River Sub-District has exercised this power since its organization in 1969. The funds thus collected have been used mainly for paying administrative costs and for financing investigations and studies that pertain to water development, use, quality control and related land use.

### Contracting Authority

When a Sub-District board feels that it is in the best interest of resource development to enter into contracts with "the United States, with public entities of South Dakota or other states or with persons" for payment of any part of the cost incurred in "acquisition of land, construction or operation and maintenance of water resource development projects," *the board must receive authority to do so by a majority vote of the electorate sub-district wide.* Such a favorable vote is commonly referred to as "granting contracting authority." The West River Sub-District will be seeking contracting authority in the November 1972 election.

### Tax Arrangement Under Contracting Authority

*When contracting authority is granted, the Sub-District has the authority to levy a total tax of not more than one mill.* Expenditures can then be made by the Sub-District for land acquisition, construction and operation and maintenance of water resource development projects.

Under contracting authority, the *Sub-District board does not necessarily have to levy the full mill*, however, it has the authority to go that high. One mill would be one dollar on each \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

## PART II — Findings Through Studies

West River South Dakota has been well studied in the past by federal agencies. Results have not been encouraging when federal agency standards of feasibility were applied and when the total project proposal covered by the study was considered. These old studies have, however, provided some valuable data that will prove useful if the Sub-District can develop certain small parts of what was covered in each study.

### Old Studies

The findings of the more significant old studies are tabulated in the table on the third page. Further information on each is available at your Sub-District office.

### Current Studies

Several studies instigated in part by the West River Sub-District are currently in progress. Brief statements regarding each follow.

1. Possible irrigation of some land in Gregory County near Joe Day Creek will be investigated as a part of the Niobrara River Basin Reappraisal Report. Feasibility with present interest rates is doubtful.
2. A Corps of Army Engineers report on the White River and tributaries will investigate 18 dam sites. Indications to date are that these sites will likely be infeasible with the exception of one on the Little White River.
3. The Soil Conservation Service is starting a river basin study on all of the rivers in the Sub-District. Possibilities under Public Law 566 will be looked at although chances of finding feasible ones are limited. The main value of this study will be the compilation of data useful to the Sub-District on developments that it may be able to make alone.
4. The Bureau of Reclamation is conducting a study on the feasibility of water distribution via pipelines from Missouri River reservoirs throughout western South Dakota for municipal, industrial and domestic use.
5. The "State Water Plan" is being prepared by the State Water Resources Commission with assistance from Sub-Districts, Universities and



other state agencies. It will inventory land and water resources river basin by river basin. Possible developments to obtain full use of the resources will be included.

### PART III — The Sub-District's Plan of Action Under Contracting Authority

A summary of preceding paragraphs indicates that old studies have not resulted in very much construction although they have provided a wealth of data, most of which is still usable. Current studies will produce more usable data and probably some construction under federal programs, especially the Middle Missouri study and domestic water supply studies. The value of past and current studies should not be discounted. Data are very valuable.

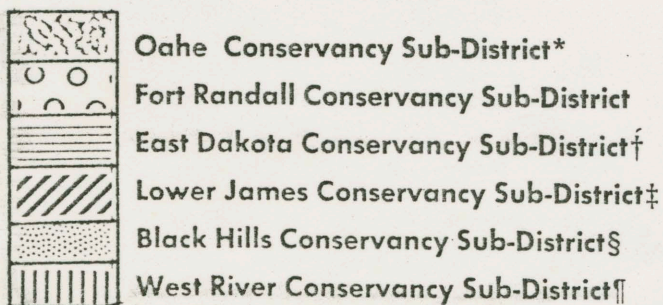
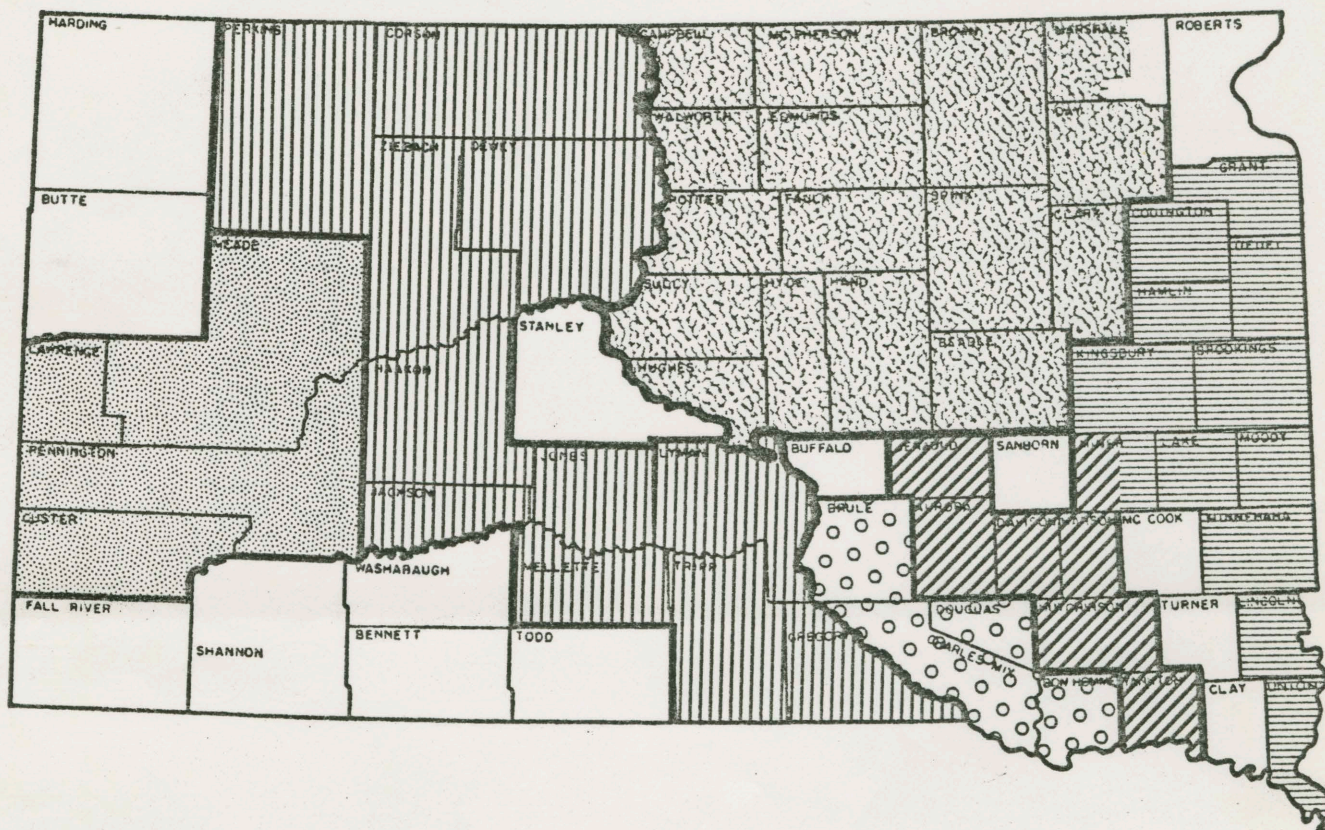
Past experience with federal studies does indicate, however, that federal studies are not likely to result

in much construction of the large scale type, such as the Oahe Unit, anywhere in the West River Sub-District.

In view of this situation, the West River Sub-District board favors adoption of a plan that will:

1. Result in a multitude of small, non-spectacular but locally useful projects in contrast to the more grandiose approach used under federal programs.
2. Be financed by (1) Sub-District money available when justifiable from the one mill tax permitted with contracting authority, (2) such state money as may become available through the new State Water Resources Management Act (see FS No. 575 in this series), (3) county, private or city funds in cases where counties, individuals or cities may be direct beneficiaries, and (4) with federal funds where any are available, including possible loan funds.

MAP NO. 1—SOUTH DAKOTA CONSERVANCY SUB-DISTRICTS



\*Excludes Town of Wetonka

†Excludes Towns of Albee, Big Stone City, Kranzberg and Wallace

‡Excludes Towns of Lane, Roswell, Utica and T107N, R63W

§Excludes Towns of Pringle and Quinn

¶Excludes Towns of Oacoma, Presho and Reliance



## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

No plan has value unless there is a way to put it to work.

The West River Sub-District directors intend to implement their plan using two techniques: (1) Activation of the presently unfunded Resources Conservation and Development Districts (RC&D) within the Sub-District by hiring a man to work with them

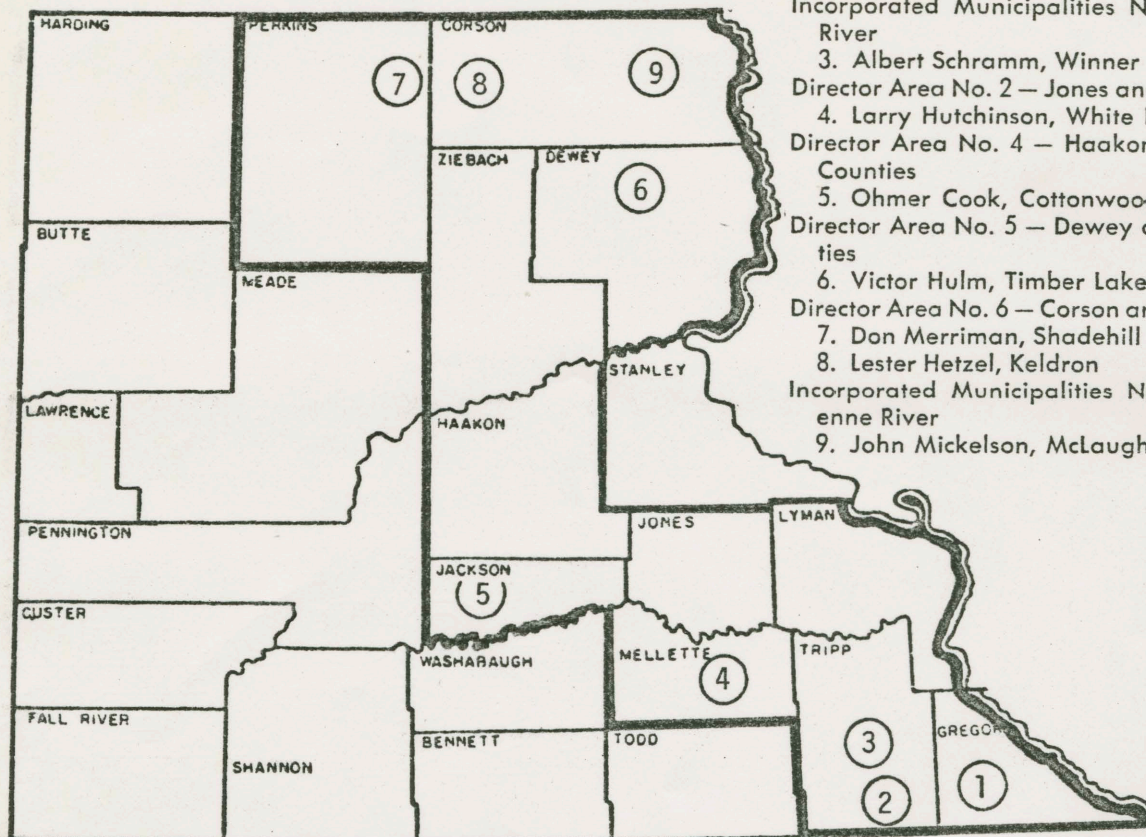
full time and do some financing with Sub-District funds. The RC&D approach lends itself well to small localized developments. See FS No. 573 in this series for more information on RC&D. And, (2) Sub-District contract arrangements that will result in construction of one or more segments of the proposals studied by federal agencies. See FS No. 574 in this series for details on this part of the implementation plan.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

Study	Date	Agency	Area of Study	Findings
"308" Report	1931	Corps of Army Engineers	White and Bad Rivers	Hydro power production not feasible. Inadequate water for large scale irrigation.
Project Development Report No. 84	1942	Bureau of Reclamation	White River	Concluded that irrigation of 42,000 acres on White River basin infeasible because of high pumping costs. Indicated that it might be feasible when low cost power became available from Missouri River dams.
Pick-Sloan Plan	1944	Corps and Bureau	Grand, Moreau, Bad and White Rivers	Concluded that flood control structures were infeasible due to sediment loads and site limitations except for Shadehill on the Grand River. It was constructed in 1951.
Report on White Division	1960	Bureau of Reclamation	White River Basin	All possibilities of irrigation in the basin investigated. The Pine Ridge Unit with water storage at Slim Butte was the only one that passed all Bureau tests.
Definite Plan Report Shadehill Irrigation Unit	1963	Bureau of Reclamation	6,700 acres of irrigation in Grand River Basin near Lemmon	Plan barely feasible by 1963 prices; probably not feasible now. Action not taken in 1963 because local people opposed development plan proposed by the Bureau. Sub-District is now negotiating with the Bureau to deliver water to irrigators under a Sub-District contract and delivery plan. Contracting authority would be needed by the Sub-District.
Report on Cheyenne Division	1964	Bureau of Reclamation	Cheyenne River Basin (Irrigation)	Conclusions were that the portion of the basin in the West River Sub-District did not offer feasible irrigation development because of doubtful water supply and high lifts. The 6,600-acre Milesville Flat was a part of this study.
Reappraisal of Little White Reservoir and Soil-Water Relationship Study	1963 and 1965	Bureau of Reclamation	Little White and Big White Basins	Concluded that about 6,600 acres of bottom land in 56 separate tracts could be feasibly irrigated from a 65,000 acre-foot storage reservoir 6 miles south of the town of White River. However, Bureau could not recommend construction under their standards because of high silt load in the Big White River that they felt would be detrimental to the land irrigated.
The Middle Missouri	1966	Bureau of Outdoor Recreation	Main Stem Missouri River	Report recommended establishing: (1) Great Prairie Lakes National Recreation Area in North and South Dakota and Nebraska, (2) Missouri Breaks National River in Montana, (3) Lewis and Clark Prairie Reserve in South Dakota, and (4) completion of Lewis and Clark Trail in South and North Dakota. Congress has not yet acted on this recommendation. West River Sub-District will be involved in planning a part of it if action is taken by Congress.
Small Watershed Studies (PL 566)	-----	Soil Conservation Service	Several small tributaries in the Sub-District	None of the areas looked at have shown promise, largely because of criteria for feasibility required by Public Law 566.
Grass Ropes, Iron Nation, Ft. Hale Units	1959	Bureau of Reclamation	Lyman County	Three small irrigation project proposals on the main stem of the Missouri River. They are located on Indian lands. All would probably still prove feasible if tribes wished to develop them.



## MAP NO. 2—WEST RIVER CONSERVANCY SUB-DISTRICT



### Key To Directors West River Conservancy Sub-District (By areas represented)

Director Area No. 1 — Lyman, Gregory, and Tripp Counties

1. J. Harvey Glover, Burke
2. Harold Zink, Wewela

Incorporated Municipalities North of the Cheyenne River

3. Albert Schramm, Winner

Director Area No. 2 — Jones and Mellette Counties

4. Larry Hutchinson, White River

Director Area No. 4 — Haakon and Jackson Counties

5. Ohmer Cook, Cottonwood

Director Area No. 5 — Dewey and Ziebach Counties

6. Victor Hulm, Timber Lake

Director Area No. 6 — Corson and Perkins Counties

7. Don Merriman, Shadehill

8. Lester Hetzel, Keldron

Incorporated Municipalities North of the Cheyenne River

9. John Mickelson, McLaughlin

The South Dakota Water Plan is being prepared in accordance with the newly enacted South Dakota Water Resources Management Act. This publication is informational material being presented to inform the public of actions and authorities that are related to the South Dakota Conservancy Districts role in the implementation of the State Water Plan.

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